



JHSD

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE

PRESIDENTS' LETTER

Dear Friends,

This is the season of Thanksgiving and Chanukah. While they both are historical in nature, there is the element of gratitude in both. Thanksgiving? Well, that's obvious just in the name of the holiday. Chanukah? Without the bravery and foresight of the Maccabees, we might all be worshipping idols; and because they preserved our ancient tradition, we are grateful. Remember the movie *Back to the Future*? That title is what those holidays are all about. In fact, that's what our mission is all about. We have respect for the past, realizing the richness of days gone by, yet we know that we always have to look to tomorrow so that our descendants will appreciate the contributions of their Jewish ancestors. They will want to investigate how all of us enriched the legacy we will hand down. The JHSD is looking for new quarters, our own space that will allow us to grow. We are proceeding in this direction and we know that we will have more to tell you in the near future. The JHSD is involved in the community of similar organizations dedicated to the preservation of history. You can read about that involvement elsewhere in our newsletter.

The JHSD will be focusing on Delaware Jewry's influence on our State's judiciary at our annual meeting. There were—and are—many Jews who have served justice well across many, many decades. Women and men have appreciated how we as Jews have historically valued justice, and through their roles as magistrates, judges or even justices, they have translated this value into their life's work. We look forward to hearing the stories of those men and women.

The JHSD wants to keep your stories, the history of your Delaware family, their contributions to our community, and make them available to future researchers. Don't minimize those stories as they all make up our past and can guide us

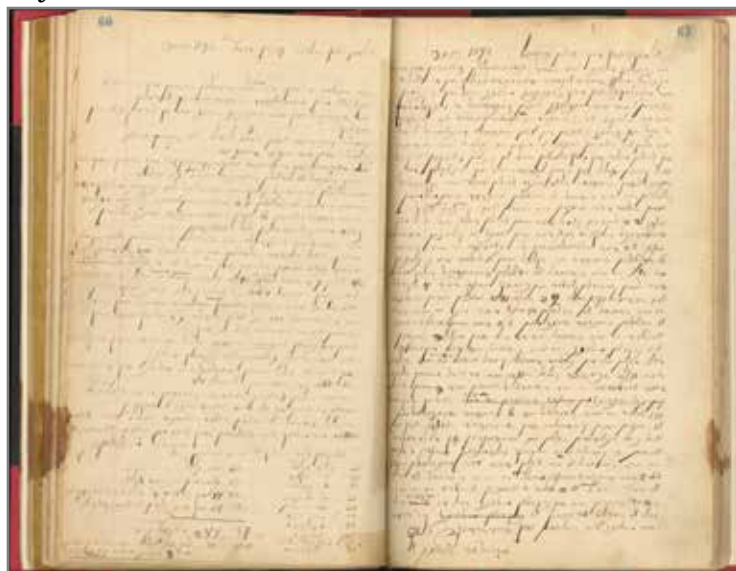
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TREASURE HUNT

Steve Ross

I'm a true believer that many things in life occur by fate, serendipity, or just "bashert." Although I grew up in Cherry Hill, NJ, and have lived in Bethesda, MD, since college, fate brought me back to Wilmington 11 years ago after my parents died.

I had been approached by a cousin who thought I might enjoy doing genealogy research as that would help me "keep the flame alive." I took to it immediately and then started a quest to research my family, which I discovered started in Wilmington in the late 19th century. My relatives included such families as Cooper, Shapiro, Closic, & Susman, many of whom are buried at Lombardy Cemetery. One day I just walked into the Delaware Historical Society where I was introduced to Connie Cooper, the senior archivist of the Society. Connie helped me greatly and I started to make periodic trips from Washington to Wilmington in order to further my research.



Connie suggested I first purchase Toni Young's fabulous book, *Becoming American, Remaining Jewish*. Toni's book was an excellent resource for me (and others) as she did painstaking research in the 1990s, presumably without the use of

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to the future.

Our best wishes to you and yours for a meaningful Thanksgiving and a light-filled Chanukah...and of course, a healthy and happy new year!

Rabbi Peter Grumbacher Dr. Gerald Resnick
Co-Presidents

TREASURE HUNT from page 1

the internet. When I traveled to Wilmington about five years ago, Connie introduced me to Gail Pietrzyk, the archivist who stewards the Jewish Historical Society's contents. I was shown the original ledger books of Adas Kodesch, then an Orthodox shul that my extended family was very involved in. I had learned that my great-great-grandfather, Isaac David Cooper, was the shamash or sexton for the shul from the 1890s until his death in 1912. His son-in-law and daughter, Louis Ross & Lena Cooper Ross eventually moved up to Camden, NJ, in 1904.

That's where the fate part comes in. A year ago I commissioned a Yiddish translator to translate 177 pages of AK's monthly minutes for the period 1890-1895 and, while he is methodically working through this project (estimated completion date Summer, 2017), I was also able to copy the monthly minutes of the shul, fortunately written in English, for the 1900-1904 period. The Yiddish and English minutes are a timeless treasure and they depict "a day in the life" of early Jewish Wilmington. I discovered that the Ross Family lived at the southwest corner of 3rd & Shipley Streets, where Louis Ross acted in a building engineer role as a quid pro quo for living on one of the upper floors of the rowhome. This home was also where Adas Kodesch conducted their services in the late 1890s until the synagogue built a new shul at 6th & French Streets. Louis developed great engineering and plumbing skills as an employee at one of Wilmington's

iron factories. These skills helped him bring value to AK, and the Ross Family probably was able to live upstairs for free, that is until a heated argument ensued between the machers of the shul and my great-grandfather.

A Jewish man named Rothman approached the shul's leaders in 1901 where he made an offer to buy the house. He wanted to set up a business at that address where he would operate a Russian bath house. The house was probably plumbed very well and the mikva in the basement was probably the lure that Mr. Rothman was sold on for his business venture. The executive committee of Adas Kodesch was very happy with the unsolicited offer for the property, and the committee approved the sale without reservation. The only rub was that Louis Ross would have to vacate the property in order to convey clear title, and Louis Ross decided that he wasn't going to be forced out unless he was paid a handsome settlement. He probably was involved in a tenants' rights case before tenants had any rights! According to the monthly minutes, the shul agreed to buy him out for the princely sum of \$161, but this incident no doubt caused permanent irrevocable harm. Louis Ross stayed as a member of the shul for another few years, but it's clear that he was persona non grata at AK. As such, the Ross Family moved to Camden, which was the genesis of our family's plumbing business that lasted 92 years over three generations.

I have realized that Jewish Wilmington is the center of the universe for many families who have gone on to live successful lives. The archives in the Jewish Historical Society are invaluable because we can read about those before us who paved the way in our society. This collection is extremely unique and valuable, and we should all commit to honor those who came before us by supporting Wilmington's wonderful treasure.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR SUMMER INTERN

Rachel Bohny

Hello, my name is Rachel Bohny and I am interning with the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware this summer. I am a Junior Marketing and English dual major with a minor in Jewish Studies with Language and International Business at the University of Delaware. This summer I am researching the history of organized Jewish religion in Delaware in preparation for the sesquicentennial coming up. For this, I am looking at all of the information already gathered about four specific congregations: Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth Congregation, Beth Emeth Congregation, Beth Shalom Congregation, Temple Beth El, Congregation Beth Sholom and the Seaside Jewish Community and Synagogue. Taking all of the histories and placing them together, I hope to fill in some of the gaps we may have in our stories and information, so that I may create one cohesive history of all six synagogues. In doing this research, I will be conducting a set of Oral History Interviews with members of some of the congregations in order to gain more information for my project as well as for future use from the Historical Society patrons. In doing so, we are able to document new, interesting facets of the community that may not have been known through the paperwork and documents we already have,

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware is grateful for the assistance of Dr. Roger Horowitz, Director, Center for the History of Business, Technology, and Society–Hagley Museum and Library and Adjunct Professor in the University of Delaware History Department and Polly Zavadviker, Assistant Professor of History and Jewish Studies and Director of Jewish Studies. Ms. Bohny presented an overview of her research at the University of Delaware's Summer Scholars Colloquium on August 9, 2018. A copy of her research on the History of Adas Kodesch is available in the JHSD collections. Please contact Gail Pietrzyk at jhsdel@yahoo.com for more information.



Rachel Bohny visited the Delaware Historical Marker on the 200 block of North Market Street on her first day at JHSD.

so an opportunity to learn new things will not be wasted. Because this research opportunity was provided to me through the University of Delaware, I am also creating a presentation on everything that I have researched and compiled and will be presenting it at a large symposium with all of the university's 'Summer Scholars,' where they will learn what I have been doing and I will learn about what my peers have been doing all summer! This is an amazing opportunity and I am already learning so much about an amazing community with such a rich historical background!

JHSD BURSTING WITH HISTORY

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware is straining at the seams and the needs of our growing Delaware Jewish community just keep getting bigger. The JHSD board has undertaken measures to remedy our overstuffed shelves and to plan for future growth of the Jewish Historical Society's collections.

For more than forty years the archives, manuscript collections and personal papers of the Jewish Historical Society have been housed in the stacks of the Delaware Historical Society and we have forged a valuable and beneficial relationship with DHS.

When we were confronted early in 2018 with accepting sizable collections from Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth, the JCC, the *Jewish Voice* and Jewish Family Services, we knew that we had to address the issue. At the same time that the JHSD collections are growing, DHS storage needs also continue to grow, so additional shelf space in our current location is not a practical solution and would not allow much room for future expansion.

The JHSD board has enlisted the support of the Jewish Federation of Delaware and undertaken to explore our options. The board

remains committed to insuring that the history of the Delaware Jewish community is preserved and the records of our congregations, agencies, and families have a safe home and room to grow in the future. We value the continuing support of our donors and members and look forward to exciting new developments in the near future.

Your support of the mission of the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware is even more important today. We hope that our 2019 membership drive will help us demonstrate the community's support for our work. We want to remind our members that our mission is first and foremost to preserve the collections and records in our care for future generations. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will learn about the work of our summer intern, Rachel Bohny, who studied this history of Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth, and Steve Ross who is working with some of its earliest history. You will also learn about our participation in National History Day. All of these activities, and many more, would not be possible without the records that have been collected and stored since 1974 when JHSD was founded. Help us look forward to the next 44 years!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**ANNUAL MEETING OF JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE
SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 2019**

**“JUSTICE, JUSTICE SHALL YOU PURSUE”
DELAWARE’S JEWISH JUDGES**

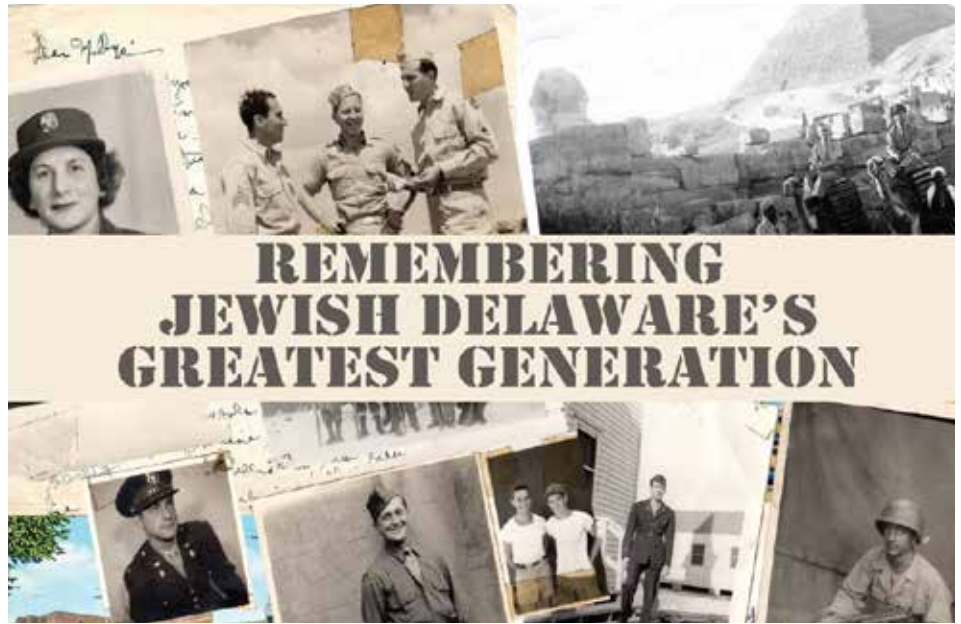
PRESENTATION BY RICHARD LEVIN
SIEGEL JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
101 GARDEN OF EDEN ROAD
WILMINGTON, DE 19803
REFRESHMENTS TO FOLLOW

SHARE YOUR STORY

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware is preparing an online web exhibit featuring letters from the "Dear Mollye" Collection and some of the stories of the men and women who made the Delaware Jewish community proud with their courage and heroism. We also want to find those letters that made us laugh, inspired us, and touched the lives of friends and family on the home front.

Do you have letters written by a GI during the war in your family's archive? Did your parent's courtship start with V-Mail? Was your father's first look at you a photo sent to an APO address? Contact the JHSD archivist to discuss how you might share your family's story and contribute to our online exhibit.

There are a couple of items we're looking for already. During the war, many of those serving regularly received copies of the *Y Recorder*. But we have recently learned about the publication sent to servicemen and women by Congregation Beth Emeth, *Contact*. There is only one issue of this publication in our collections. Do you have one in yours? We would love to hear from you if you do or if you have any information about the newsletter.



The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware's collection known as the "Dear Mollye" Letters is the core of a new program exploring some of the remarkable stories of heroism and courage of those who served in World War II.

First presented to Delaware state employees in Dover for Jewish American Heritage Month in 2016, at Temple Beth El in 2017 and for the 2018 Annual Meeting of the JHSD, this presentation is available for your organization. Please call the archivist, Gail Pietrzyk, at (302) 655-6232 or email at jhsdel@yahoo.com, for more information.

WHAT WE ARE

The JHSD was founded in 1974 and incorporated in 1975 for the purpose of acquiring, preserving and sharing materials pertaining to the history of Jewish settlement and Jewish life in the State of Delaware.

WHAT WE DO

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware seeks out, collects and preserves written, spoken and photographic records; publishes a newsletter, mounts displays and exhibits and provides access to archival collections to genealogists, researchers, students and other interested persons.

THROWBACK DELAWARE

As the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware goes about the business of cataloging and preserving the records of the Delaware Jewish community, some items require special handling. One of these 'special needs' collections is the paper copies of *The Jewish Voice*. Newsprint paper in the twentieth century was typically acidic, unbuffered paper meant for short-term use. You have all seen the characteristic tanning and brittle quality of old newspapers. We are delighted that the current issues of *The Jewish Voice* are printed in a manner that is more likely to age gracefully, but we still had a problem. Storing old papers in a climate controlled environment could slow the aging process, but it would not entirely forestall the inevitable deterioration of our newsprint copies. The JHSD knew that the back issues of *The Jewish Voice* were too valuable a record and we would need to undertake a more active role to insure that you would be able to look up the obituary of your grandfather or perhaps find that recipe your mother had clipped out of the paper years ago. In many cases, *The Jewish Voice* is the only surviving record of some significant moments in our community's history.

In 2017, the JHSD approached the Jewish Federation of Delaware with a request for support to help us scan and preserve a digital copy of the issues of *The Jewish Voice* not preserved in any other format. A microfilm

copy of the paper preserves the issues published from 1943 until 1983. Our plan was to begin a multi-year program of scanning copies of *The Voice* from 1983 until the paper began creating native digital files in this century.

JHSD was excited about the digital editions and so was the Jewish Federation of Delaware and *The Jewish Voice*. We were invited to submit an article from the archives of *The Jewish Voice* for each month's issue beginning in January 2018. It's been an interesting experience reading the back issues of *The Voice* and exploring the events and concerns of years past. We have enjoyed sharing the excellent articles written to commemorate notable events, people, and ideas and we hope you have enjoyed learning more about the history of Delaware's Jewish community.

"It was particularly fun to look at things like the old cookbooks and recipes. Some articles are more thought provoking, like Rabbi David Geffen's essay about the heroes and heroines of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and it's always a learning experience," says archivist, Gail Pietrzyk. We hope that today's readers of *The Voice* find these articles interesting and would welcome volunteers who would like to help find selections for future 'Throwback Delaware' columns. Please contact the JHSD by phone, (302) 655-6232, or email, jhsdel@yahoo.com if you would like to volunteer for this fascinating assignment.

SEE WHAT YOU MISSED

Many of the annual meetings of the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware have been interesting and lively events. In recent years the topics have included Music, Politics, Sports, Art, Yiddish Poetry and Lincoln and the Jews. We often enjoy a good turnout for these programs and many members look forward to them each year. But if you were not able to attend, don't despair. The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware has videotaped all these recent presentations and you may purchase a copy for your own collection.

Perhaps your group or organization is looking for an interesting and informative program for your members. A video recording of one of the JHSD annual meeting events might be an excellent choice.

Contact our archivist, Gail Pietrzyk, at (302) 655-6232 to discuss how we might help you see what you missed.

JHSD TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL HISTORY DAY

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware and the Halina Wind Preston Holocaust Education Committee are proud to participate in this year's National History Day Program for Delaware. We are excited to be part of this nationwide effort to nurture the research skills of the next generation.

Those of us who have chosen history-related careers often remember a junior or high school project that really opened this magical world and inspired us to learn more. We are so glad that Delaware teachers are helping their students make these discoveries.

National History Day teaches critical thinking, writing, and research skills and boosts performance across all subjects. Students learn 21st century college and career-ready skills such as learning to collaborate



with team members, talking to experts, managing their time, and perseverance. NHD inspires students to do more than they ever thought possible. Students engage in research and interpretation of historical topics, locate and utilize primary and secondary sources, hone their critical thinking by analyzing and synthesizing information from a variety of texts and documents and enhance their communication and presentation skills.

Students choose a topic that relates to the annual theme, research the topic, and develop their research into scholarly projects that take the form

of dramatic performance, imaginative exhibit, multimedia documentary, research paper, or website. The process and implementation of National History Day in the classroom transforms your students into playwrights, artists, filmmakers, writers, and web designers as they create unique, contemporary expressions of history.

The Delaware Historical Society is proud to sponsor the National History Day program. It is a privilege to support the contestants who work hard to represent Delaware on a national scale.

For more information about the National History Day program, please visit nhd.org. Information about the program in Delaware may be found at dehistory.org/national-history-day

VISIT US ON FACEBOOK.

The Jewish Historical Society of Delaware is now on Facebook. Visit us, like us, and please share posts from us and with us. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/JHSDel/>



LEND US YOUR SUPPORT! If you have not already made an annual membership contribution, or if you want to lend your financial support to this vibrant, active organization, please return this coupon with your check to: Jewish Historical Society of Delaware, 505 North Market Street, Wilmington, DE 19801

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|---|---------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student | \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor | \$100.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (over 65) | \$15.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$250.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | \$30.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor | \$500.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family/Household | \$35.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional | \$75.00 | | |

Please make your check payable to the Jewish Historical Society of Delaware. Your contribution is fully tax-deductible under applicable IRS guidelines.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Telephone _____

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☐ Please do not publish my name as a member.

A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

JHSD and Adas Kodesh Shel Emeth congregation were pleased to welcome Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel, Rabbi Emeritus of Rodfei Zedek in Chicago, to Wilmington in May. Rabbi Gertel has a long-time interest in Percival Goodman, the leading architect of American synagogues in the mid-twentieth century. Rabbi Gertel graciously agreed to speak about his research on Thursday, May 24, 2018. His presentation described the design choices Goodman made to create spiritually uplifting spaces for community worship exemplified in the Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth synagogue.

Gertel's detailed study, "Engaging, Artistic Invitations to Jewish Life: The Synagogues of Percival Goodman," was published in the Fall 2016 issue of *CCAR Journal: The Reform Jewish Quarterly*.



Rabbi Elliot B. Gertel admires the architect's drawing of Adas Kodesch Shel Emeth in May

SIGN UP FOR EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

The JHSD is pleased to bring you this newsletter and we know you have waited a long time for it. Preparing this publication, printing it and mailing it takes time and money. We would like to send news and announcements to our members more quickly and cost-effectively. When you renew your membership please send us your email address and we will be able to send you updates about our activities, events and other news. If you decide to opt-out of receiving our email newsletters, you may make that change at anytime. Of course, we will protect your privacy and not share your information with anyone else.

 **JHSD**
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